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AUTHOR Lewis-Palmer, Teri; Flannery, Brigid; Sugai, George; Eber, Lucille

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ABSTRACT

This monograph describes the unique features of secondary schools and the application of a systems approach to school discipline at the secondary level. The use of effective behavior support (EBS) designed to increase the capacity of schools to educate all students, especially students with behavioral challenges, is highlighted. Critical features of EBS are listed and include a focus on: (1) organizations, routines, and processes of student supports; (2) prevention; (3) organizational routines and structures that promote and support decision making, planning, and problem solving; (4) teaching behavioral expectations directly; (5) adaptation and sustained use of empirically sound practices; and (6) use of contextually appropriate and acquired information to guide decisions. An overview of the continuum of effective behavior supports is provided. Descriptive case study information is then presented from 10 secondary schools participating in a state-wide implementation of a school-wide discipline program. The study found challenges to implementing positive behavior interventions and supports included getting started, resources, support, staff consistency and buy-in, and collecting and analyzing data. The monograph closes with recommendations for future research. (Contains 20 references.) (CR)

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Teri Lewis-Palmer
Brigid Flannery
George Sugai
University of Oregon

Lucille Eber
Illinois State Board of Education

Series Editors

Jim Chapple
The Council of Administrators of Special Education

Lyndal M. Bullock & Robert A. Gable
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CASE is an international and professional organization committed to facilitating the education and general welfare of students with disabilities. CASE promotes professional leadership and provides special education administrators with opportunities for personal and professional development.

Council for Children with Behavioral Disorders

About the Council for Children with Behavioral Disorders

CCBD is an international and professional organization committed to promoting and facilitating the education and general welfare of children and youth with behavioral and emotional disorders. CCBD, whose members include educators, parents, mental health personnel, and a variety of other professionals, actively pursues quality educational services and program alternatives for persons with behavioral disorders, advocates for the needs of such children and youth, emphasizes research and professional growth as vehicles for better understanding behavioral disorders, and provides professional support for persons who are involved with and serve children and youth with behavioral disorders.

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About This Monograph

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Requests for information should be addressed to Teri Lewis-Palmer, College of Education, 1235 University of Oregon, Eugene, OR 97403-1235.

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Foreword

Nationwide, school personnel are working to ensure every student a safe, drug-free, quality education. There is no doubt about either the importance or complexity of that task. With mounting pressure to ensure student safety, some school divisions have adopted a so-called zero-tolerance policy of student discipline. No one would quarrel with the original intent of zero tolerance, namely, to protect students from dangerous weapons in schools. However, some authorities do question the logic behind applying the same philosophy to less serious offenses, such as when a student fails to participate in class discussion. Others argue that there are discrepancies in the way current disciplinary policies are being applied. Evidence exists that students from culturally diverse backgrounds often are disproportionately subjected to more severe treatment. A similar concern has been voiced on behalf of students with disabilities. Increasingly, administrators, teachers, and parents are calling for a reasonable middle ground in addressing the issue of student discipline.

At the same time, schools are finding that some established instructional practices are at odds with the needs of an increasingly diverse student population. Although we are witnessing an increase in the use of curricular materials and instructional procedures that reflect greater cultural sensitivity, there is more to be done in this area. With these issues in mind, it is encouraging to find a growing acceptance that a reciprocal relationship exists between learning and behavior problems and that it is shortsighted to address one and ignore the other. Accordingly, more and more administrators, faculty, and staff are redefining the culture of their schools and creating a climate in which school-wide and

classroom-level positive academic and behavior supports are in place for all students.

Further impetus for changing current practices stems from the 1997 Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), which contains provisions that address both the academic and nonacademic performance of students with disabilities. For example, IDEA stipulates that education personnel must not only acknowledge the connection between learning and behavior problems, but also, under certain conditions, take specific steps to address the problem(s). If a student's classroom behavior impedes his or her academic progress or that of classmates, it may signal a need to change one or more aspects of the curriculum, management, or instruction. In limited instances, schools must conduct a functional behavioral assessment and then develop a positive behavioral intervention plan and supports. In that way, more serious learning or behavior problems (usually both) can be addressed.

The Council of Administrators of Special Education (CASE) and the Council for Children with Behavioral Disorders (CCBD) have long shared a common concern about students with and without disabilities. In light of the challenges faced in schools, the leaders of these two divisions of the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) decided to cosponsor two institutes on best practices for working with students with learning and behavior problems. We drew upon the expertise of our members to produce a mini-library series that corresponds with the content of these institutes. We are grateful to those who served as both presenters and authors. We also acknowledge those who served as reviewers of these volumes: Charlene Greene (CASE), Bev Johns (CCBD), Bev McCoud (CASE), Russ Skiba (CCBD), Cheryl Zinszer (CASE), John Faust (CASE), and Jim McCormick (CASE). Together, they have contributed a great deal to our understanding of the challenges of 21st century schools.

Lyndal M. Bullock, Jim Chapple, and Robert A. Gable
Series Editors

Introduction 1

Schools are responsible for developing and sustaining both academic and social behavioral gains in their students. In recent years, however, achieving this outcome has become increasingly difficult (Lewis & Sugai, 1999). In fact, school violence has become one of the leading educational concerns (Colvin, Kame'enui, & Sugai, 1993; Noguera, 1995; Walker, Colvin, & Ramsey, 1995). The report of the National Education Goals Panel (1996) indicated that lack of discipline is viewed as the biggest problem faced by public schools. In addition, the report indicates that classroom disruptions are increasing. The number of students with aggressive, acting-out, and/or antisocial behavior is steadily increasing, and more special education services are being required (Sugai & Horner, 1994, 1999). Today, one-half of school children report feeling unsafe at school (Leitman & Binns, 1993), and two-thirds of parents do not feel that their children are safe at school or in surrounding neighborhoods (Rose & Gallup, 1998). In sum, disruptive and violent behavior in schools is detrimental to students, schools, and communities.

Fighting, violence, and gangs; lack of discipline; lack of funding; and use of drugs were rated by the general public as the biggest problems facing schools for the 16th consecutive year (Rose & Gallup, 1998). While youth violence (as measured by arrest records, victimization data, and hospital emergency room records, for example) has declined since 1993, youth reports on the proportion of those who have committed physically injurious and potentially lethal acts remain unchanged since 1993 (U.S. Surgeon General, 2001). In addition, arrest rates for aggravated assaults remain 70% higher than in 1983 and have dropped only 24% from the peak rates of 1993 (U.S. Surgeon General, 2001).

Schools can offer regular, predictable, and positive learning and teaching environments that foster academic and social success by providing regular positive reinforcement and modeling of appropriate behavior. However, schools face great challenges in their ability to foster student success. Increasingly, they must adapt their environments to support students with diverse strengths, needs, languages, cultures, and ethnic backgrounds. The ability to accommodate individual differences is hindered by the fact that the schools are continually being asked to do more with less (Office of Special Education Programs [OSEP], 2000). New district, state, and federal initiatives are presented annually to schools. Not surprisingly, schools are finding that resources to implement these initiatives are strained to the limit.

Schools often lack the capacity and the resources they need to effectively implement all the mandates, initiatives, and programs required to provide complete and comprehensive systems of support. To alleviate this predicament, schools need to restructure the way in which they do business. First, they need to build a foundation that prevents students from becoming at risk for school failure. Next, they need to build systems that organize their many initiatives and programs to work efficiently. Finally, they need to build the capacity to identify students with intense needs and provide them with the individualized and specialized support necessary for their success.

In this monograph we describe the unique features of secondary schools and the application of a systems approach to school discipline at the secondary level. Next, we present descriptive case study information from 10 secondary schools participating in a state-wide implementation of a school-wide discipline program. Finally, we discuss recommendations and considerations for future research.

2 Unique Features of Secondary Schools

Most of the literature describing or evaluating the impact of school-wide approaches to discipline involve implementation at the primary level; few focus on secondary schools. However, according to a report by the U.S. Surgeon General (2001), the number of violent acts by high school seniors increased nearly 50% over the past two decades. Moreover, student self-report data indicate that the proportion of adolescents involved in nonfatal violence or injured by a weapon at school has not declined (U.S. Surgeon General, 2001). The Surgeon General's report specifically called for programs addressing late-onset violence and antisocial behavior.

Simply applying effective elementary school strategies to secondary school settings is inadvisable. Secondary students present different kinds of challenges than elementary students. Differences include increased freedom and choice, changes in social interactions with peers and teachers (Newmann, Byrk, & Nagaoka, 2000), unfamiliar and problematic academic and social demands (Felner, Ginter, & Primavera, 1992), and larger, longer classes with frequent classroom and teacher changes (Newmann et al., 2000). Furthermore, during adolescence peer influences increase, while family influences decrease (Newmann et al., 2000; Smith, 1997; U.S. Surgeon General, 2001). In fact, the influence of the family is largely supplanted by peer influences.

According to Renihan and Renihan (1995), secondary school success is based on the unique set of values and beliefs shared throughout the school. This perspective coincides with the premise of establishing an environment with an agreed-upon set of

expectations, procedures for encouraging appropriate behavior, and procedures for discouraging inappropriate behavior via a school-wide team-based problem-solving model (Lewis & Sugai, 1999; Sugai & Horner, in press). The difficulty arises in adapting the model to a secondary school climate.

Recommendations from the effective schools literature for secondary schools support the elements of a preventative approach just mentioned. They also stress the importance of changing the organizational patterns within schools, fostering relationships between students and staff, and establishing an environment of community responsiveness (Renihan & Renihan, 1995). Programs that focus on individual students (e.g., academic and social skills) and environmental factors (e.g., school climate, peer group interactions) are more effective than those that focus solely on individuals and risk behaviors (U.S. Surgeon General, 2001).

Although the features of effective programs are clear, the fidelity of implementation of these programs greatly influences their impact (Lewis & Sugai, 1999; Sugai & Horner, in press; U.S. Surgeon General, 2001). In particular, secondary schools may have limited ability to adopt and maintain effective programs because of (a) limited interactions among staff to coordinate efforts and increase consistency and (b) the high number of new or unfamiliar students (Newmann et al., 2000). Because identification of student needs and staff collaboration in secondary schools is difficult, a systems approach is required that focuses not only on effective strategies but also on the systems that support staff implementation of these strategies.

3 A Systems Approach to School Discipline

Home, school, and community factors contribute to the development and maintenance of antisocial behaviors. In the home setting, inconsistent management, reactive discipline, and lack of parental monitoring appear to increase the risk of developing antisocial behaviors (Dishion, Patterson, Stoolmiller, & Skinner, 1991). In community settings, an antisocial network of peers and lack of prosocial engagements have been recognized as contributors to the development of an antisocial life-style (Biglan, 1995).

While all three environments play integral and collaborative roles in the development and prevention of antisocial behavior, our focus is on the school. Mayer (1995) identified several features within schools that contribute to the development of antisocial behaviors: (a) a reactive/punishing discipline approach; (b) lack of agreement about rules, expectations, and consequences; (c) lack of staff support; (d) failure to consider and accommodate individual differences; and (e) academic failure. While each of these factors increases the risk of failure, approaches designed to establish proactive school-wide discipline have been identified. One such approach is Effective Behavior Support (EBS) (e.g., Lewis & Sugai, 1999: Taylor-Greene et al., 1997; Sugai & Horner, 1994, 1999).

Effective Behavior Support is a systems approach designed to increase the capacity of schools to (a) educate all students, especially students with behavioral challenges, and (b) adopt and sustain use of research-validated practices (Lewis & Sugai, 1999; Sugai & Horner, 1994, 1999). While there are several factors associated with the implementation of EBS, Table 1 highlights its most critical features.

TABLE 1
Critical Features of Effective Behavior Support

Feature	*Description*
System	Focus on organization, routines, and processes of school-wide, non-classroom, classroom, and individual student supports.
Prevention	Focus on decreasing the likelihood that problem behavior is learned and displayed.
Process	Focus on the organizational routines and structures that promote and support individualized and sustained decision making, planning, and problem solving.
Instructional	Focus on teaching behavioral expectations directly at the school-wide, small-group, and individual student levels.
Empirically Sound Practices	Focus on adoption and sustained use of practices that have systematically acquired evidence of their effectiveness.
Data-based Decision Making	Focus on the use of contextually appropriate and acquired information to guide decisions regarding problem identification and intervention effectiveness and enhancement.

In general, EBS emphasizes the use of data to guide the careful adoption, individualized adaptation, accurate implementation, and long-term, sustained use of research-validated practices and systems. Priority is given to positive and practical strategies that

- Teach and encourage skills associated with academic, personal, and interpersonal success.
- Can be integrated into the design and presentation of effective academic instruction and curriculum.
- Maximize academic engagement and achievement.
- Make nonadaptive behavior ineffective, inefficient, and irrelevant.
- Are acceptable to and can be implemented by members of the natural community.
- Are research validated.
- Can be supported by local resources and expertise.
- Are culturally appropriate and respectful.

In addition, the intensity of the strategy or intervention is matched to the intensity of the problem context (e.g., student level

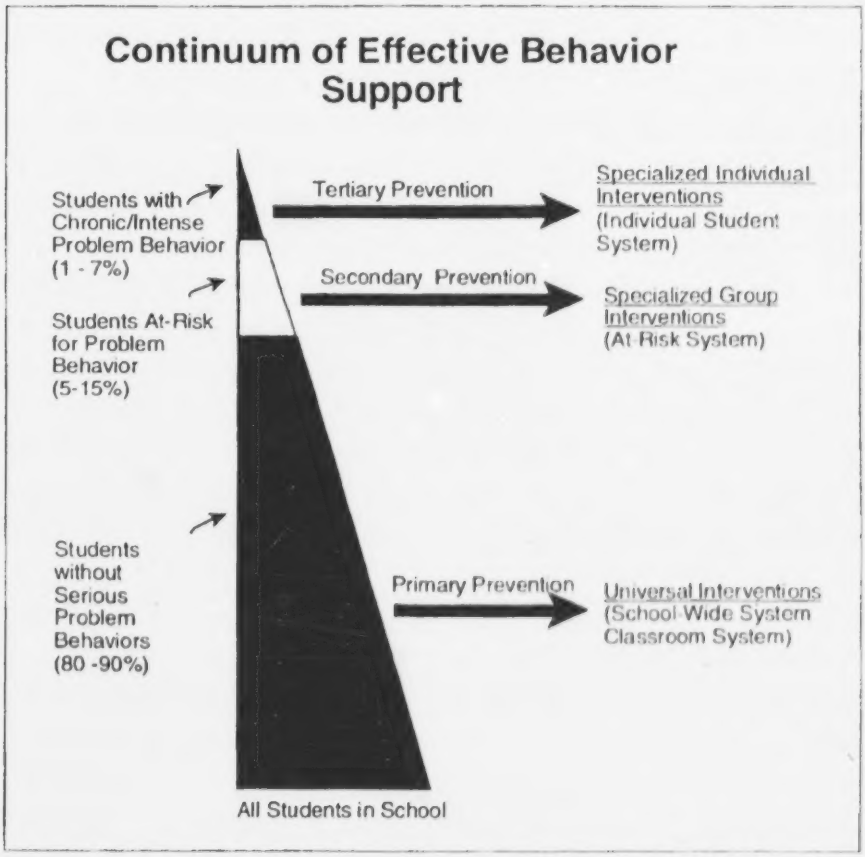
Continuum of Effective Behavior Support
Students with Chronic/Intense Problem Behavior (1 - 7%)
Students At-Risk for Problem Behavior (5-15%)
Students without Serious Problem Behaviors (80 -90%)
Tertiary Prevention
Specialized Individual Interventions (Individual Student System)
Secondary Prevention
Specialized Group Interventions (At-Risk System)
Primary Prevention
Universal Interventions (School-Wide System Classroom System)
All Students in School

FIGURE 1. Overview of Effective Behavior Continuum of Support

of need). Therefore, a three-tiered model of prevention consisting of universal, specialized group, and specialized individualized interventions is applied to the EBS approach (see Figure 1). Universal interventions consist of school-wide discipline and classroom management systems and practices that are presented to all students and staff in all settings to prevent the development of nonadaptive social behavior and promote the development of prosocial skills. Specialized group interventions are those that address the educational needs of students who have learning and behavioral characteristics that predict academic and/or social behavior failure. Specialized individualized interventions are developed individually for students with well-established repertoires of emotional and behavioral challenges and their families

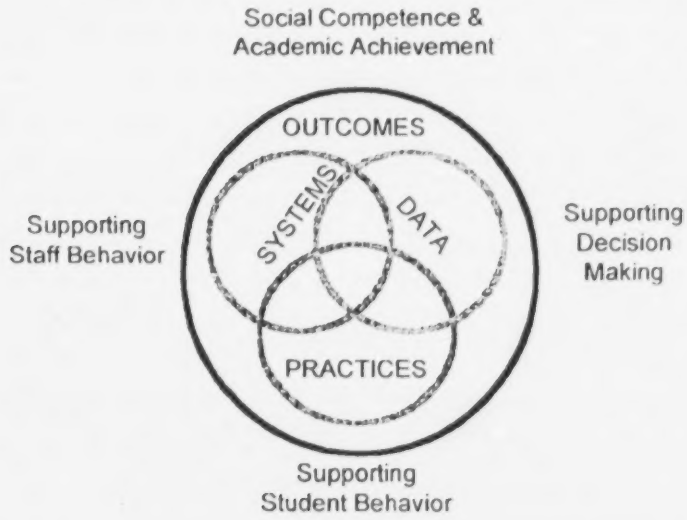

FIGURE 2. Data, Systems, and Practices Organizational Model

and involve behavior supports from multiple agents (e.g., school, mental health, medical, juvenile justice).

The EBS approach is *not* a specific curriculum or set of strategies. Rather, it is an organizational structure designed to provide schools with systems tools for improving (a) their programmatic decision-making capacity at the school-wide level, (b) integration and coordination of multiple initiatives with similar purposes and objectives, and (c) sustained provision of positive behavior support for all students.

Likewise, the EBS continuum is *not* intended to replace any current behavior- related school initiatives. Instead, EBS provides a means of prioritizing, organizing, and integrating current school, district, and state initiatives. In particular, EBS promotes a balanced consideration of (a) practices to support improvement of student social development and behavior, (b) systems to support school staff adoption and sustained use of empirically supported practices, and (c) data to support decisions related to practices and systems (Figure 2).

Case Study 4

The case study presented here provides descriptive information from 10 secondary schools currently implementing EBS as part of a state-wide school discipline program. The study presents information regarding demographics and rates of student behavior and includes descriptions of the successes and challenges these 10 schools have experienced.

Setting

As of the spring of 2001, the Illinois State Board of Education, in collaboration with the Center on Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (CPBIS, had completed 3 years of a state-wide implementation of a systems-based school-wide discipline model (e.g., Lewis & Sugai, 1999). A total of 206 schools were participating in the project. The schools were distributed across four regions: North (n = 75), Chicago (n = 8), Central (n = 72), and South (n = 51). Of these schools, 21% (n = 47) were middle schools (grades 6–8), 9% (n = 19) were high schools (grades 9–12), and 1% (n = 3) were combined middle/high schools (grades 6–12).

The average enrollment of the 206 schools was 485 (range 42–2,381). They included 39.8% in urban settings, 32.3% in suburban settings, and 27.9% in rural settings. The average percentage of students who received free and reduced lunch was 43.9 (range 0.3%–99.9%).

Participants

As part of the larger state-wide project, schools were asked to voluntarily submit data for an evaluation of implementation efforts.

TABLE 2
Demographic Information from Case Study Schools

School	*Size*	*Grades*	*Setting*[1]	*Students Receiving Free/ Reduced-Price Lunches (%)*	*Students from Minority Groups (%)*	*Students Receiving Special Education Services (%)*
1	486	6–8	R	41.0	30.0	16.7
2	945	6–8	U	46.7	39.4	16.0
3	1170	6–8	S	0.2	15.0	13.8
4	1160	6–8	S	0.5	13.8	8.0
5	1027	6–8	U	37.2	40.1	15.0
6	474	9–12	R	49.8	1.4	11.0
7	1492	9–12	U	9.2	25.6	15.0
8	1200	9–12	U	16.0	33.0	18.0
9	756	9–12	R	36.0	13.0	12.0
10	230	6–12	R	22.0	0.0	5.0
Mean	894			25.9	21.1	13.1

[1]R = rural; U = urban; S = suburban

A sample of the middle schools (n = 5), high schools (n = 4), and middle/high schools (n = 1) provided data for this descriptive case study. Demographic information from the 10 case study schools is provided in Table 2 and includes (a) enrollment, (b) grade levels, (c) setting, (d) percentage of students receiving free/reduced-price lunch, (e) percentage considered minority, and (f) percentage eligible for special education.

Procedure

As part of their involvement in the state-wide implementation of the PBIS initiative, all 10 schools (a) established a PBIS leadership team, (b) reviewed behavioral incident and self-assessment data, and (c) developed and implemented data-based school-wide action plans. In addition, each team received technical assistance

and staff development opportunities from regional coordinators and coaches.

At the end of the school year, each PBIS team submitted a profile related to (a) school and student demographics, (b) student behavior, (c) team activities, and (d) implementation challenges. The PBIS teams also completed descriptive summaries of the school profiles, including archival information and team reports and ratings.

Findings

Student Behavior

Schools provided information on the following measures of student behavior: office discipline referrals, in-school suspensions, and out-of school suspensions. When available, schools provided that information for 2 consecutive years. For comparison purposes, information on student behavior was converted to behavior incidents per day per 100 students. Of the 10 schools, 8 provided information about student behavior; 2 stated that they did not have a system available to summarize their data, or that the data management person was not available to provide the team with the requested information.

Office Discipline Referrals

On average, the rate of office discipline referrals/day/100 students was .40 (range .08–.97) were reported across the 10 schools. Three schools provided information from 2 consecutive years. Little or no change in rates of problem behavior (average .35 – .39) was obtained across years.

In-School Suspensions

Seven schools provided information on in-school suspensions. One school indicated that it did not use in-school suspension. Two provided information for 2 years, with little variation in rates across years (.10 – .11). On average, the in-school suspension rate was .16 in-school suspensions/day/100 students (range .01–.44).

Out-of-School Suspensions

The average number of out-of-school suspensions/day/100 students was .09 (range .01–.21). Three schools reported data for 2 years, with no variation across years.

Activities

The school profile provides three types of information about the activities that PBIS teams initiated across the school year: (a) it describes the types of strategies PBIS teams participated in; (b) it rates the level of staff participation in strategy implementation; and (c) it rates the level of impact.

Strategies

Nine schools provided enough information for analysis. Across these nine schools, 30 different strategies were described (i.e., 3.33 per school). Of these, 77% focused on the Universal Level, 17% on the Targeted-Group Level, 6% on the Targeted-Individual Level, and none on the Wraparound Level.

Staff Participation

For each of the strategies, the PBIS teams rated staff participation as full (80%–100%), partial (60%–70%), or minimal (less than 50%). A total of 60% of the strategies were rated as Full Participation, 16% as Partial Participation, and 24% as Minimal Participation.

Impact

With respect to level of strategy impact within their schools, PBIS teams reported 50% of strategies as having either Very High or High impact (17% and 33% respectively). Another 46% were rated as having Medium impact, and 8% were rated as having Low impact.

Implementation Challenges

The PBIS teams were asked to describe any roadblocks and challenges they experienced while attempting to implement a systems

approach. In addition to a brief description, teams categorized each challenge by type (i.e., Data, Systems, Practices) and Level (i.e., Universal, Targeted Group, Individual).

Type of Challenge

Of the challenges experienced by PBIS teams, 56% concerned Systems, 17% Data, and 27% Practices. Some of the most frequently mentioned challenges included (a) getting started, (b) resources/support, (c) staff consistency and buy-in, and (d) collecting and analyzing data.

Level of Challenge

Most challenges were categorized at the Universal level (81%), while 14% were at the Targeted Group level and 5% at the Individual level.

5 Recommendations and Considerations for Future Research

The need clearly exists to address school disruption and violence at the secondary level. While several different programs currently are in use, the empirical support documenting their effectiveness is lacking (U.S. Surgeon General, 2001). In addition, little is known about the structures and resources required to sustain the high-fidelity use of research-validated practices in schools—especially beyond 1 or 2 years of implementation. Because of these challenges, there is an urgent need to explore systems approaches to school-wide discipline instead of isolated strategies and practices.

A main focus of the EBS approach is to create school environments that are organized to increase their effectiveness *and* their efficiency. Results from the case study described in this monograph offer an initial perspective on how secondary schools perceive their efforts to implement school-wide discipline programs. The emphasis on building a strong universal system to support all students, the high levels of staff participation, and the reported impact of the selected strategies are encouraging. However, the data are preliminary and should be viewed with several limitations in mind. First, results are presented from only 10 schools (from the same state). Second, the data are descriptive and do not provide a means of experimentally demonstrating that changes are due to the teams' school-wide efforts. Third, several other secondary schools participated in this state-wide effort but did not submit information about their progress. The experiences of these

schools may not be representative of the secondary schools involved in the state-wide project. Finally, most data represented only 1 year of implementation and thus do not allow for an analysis of sustainability beyond the first year.

Future efforts need to focus on more rigorous and longitudinal evaluation of school-wide implementation of EBS that goes beyond descriptive and evaluative data and assesses the sustainability of implementation and outcomes. In addition, a systematic study must be conducted of the distinct characteristics of secondary schools that should be considered and accommodated when attempting to establish a school-wide approach to EBS. We are just beginning to learn about the unique characteristics of secondary schools, and we need to learn much more to be able to successfully apply best practices. Of particular concern in secondary schools is the impact of (a) school size; (b) departmental organization, communication, and decision making; (c) the role of secondary curriculum and instruction; (d) student drop-outs; and (e) remedial options for students who are unsuccessful within the typical curriculum.

These characteristics necessitate accommodations in the EBS processes and practices that have been used successfully in elementary and middle schools. The preliminary results from the case study offer directions for future attempts to improve and study school-wide EBS implementation efforts.

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